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The militarists' mistake

... In fact their ideology is dying and not effective. They think very much in 19th Century terms and ... are trying in 19th Century terms to use military strength to overcome their other shortcomings."

Adm. Stansfield Turner, the new Central Intelligence Agency chief, was speaking of the Soviet Union. But his thoughts apply to the 40 senators who voted Wednesday in a losing cause against Paul C. Warnke to be this country's top disarmament negotiator.

Warnke forthrightly seeks arms control. But

his opponents' charge that he would weaken U.S. defenses is absurd and revealing. To paraphrase Turner, Warnke's foes — led by retired Cold Warriors — think very much in 30-year-old terms and try to use military strength to overcome their shortcomings.

Warnke knows the Soviet threat; he knows it's time to reduce it through mutual arms reductions before time runs out.

Turner said the Soviets trail this country economically and technologically. Warnke can help free more attention for that conflict.